

Basic Outline

Introduction:

I am taking you through the “Foundations of a Godly Leader” from 1 Samuel, as we look at King Saul and King David’s life.

Last Sunday, we saw how the nation of Israel asked for a king so that they could be like the other nations. They wanted someone to unite their nation and to fight their wars for them. They didn’t see these duties as a spiritual action, but as a secular one, and so asked for a king. This action rejected God as the God of “everything” and tried to compartmentalize Him into the religious arena. This is a lesson for us as well as we must remember that we are “Spiritual Beings” and all of our needs arise primarily from spiritual needs

Then we examined “the Call of Saul” and realized he was the best available to God and God called him for a specific task...to be the first king of Israel. Saul was full of potential. He was full of promise. But something was missing in this man. As we looked at his qualifications, we saw some of the cracks in the foundations of his leadership.

We saw that Saul was selected because of his external characteristics...he was tall, because his family was well known and his father was a man of valor and that he was a handsome man. He had all of the “external” characteristics of a leader and the nation of Israel was ready to follow him.

But while he had external qualities about himself, we didn’t get to find out what kind of character he had. This week, it becomes evident. Surely you have heard what happens when you shake a glass of milk? What is inside comes out. So it is with King Saul. His true character is going to be revealed in the midst of the shaking of his life.

1. Intro to shortcuts.

All of us take shortcuts at one time or another...when we are driving and we see traffic backed up, we look for an alternative way to go so that we can avoid the lengthy delays. And sometimes our shortcuts really don’t work out...we get lost, we get stuck behind school buses, or we run into additional detours. Shortcuts don’t always turn out to be short cuts do they?

I read somewhere the 48% of American workers admit to having tried to take shortcuts and cut corners when it comes to the quality of their work.

The Nuclear Reactor in Northwestern Ohio that has been in the news for the corrosion was the result of shortcuts. Inspectors wanting to save time, company manager wanting to save a few dollars in downtime.

How many of us have read the "Cliff Notes" version of a novel so we didn't have to read the whole book?

One professor discovered that 40% of her students had plagiarized their term papers from papers they found on the Internet. They were trying to avoid the work, and still get the reward.

You can be efficient without being immoral.

The problem arises when your short-cut cuts into God's agenda. , Because at its core, TEMPTATION is a shortcut.....a fast track to quick results. TEMPTATION masquerades as better, quicker, and easier, but in the end it is always the more expensive and painful way. From steroids, to premarital sex, to cheating on Wall Street, TEMPTATION looks, sounds, and feels good on the surface. But beneath its facade, the reward is short-term and the consequence is long-term and painful. As [Proverbs 14:12](#) says "There is a way that SEEMS right to man, but in the end it leads to destruction." Now, all of us have taken these shortcuts...these ways that have seemed right and end up painfully wrong.

Fall of Saul

- I. **Leaders are destined to fail if they value expediency over righteousness.**
 - a. This is an area of character. Godly character knows that it is more important to obey God than it is to "just get the job done"
 - b. Scripture & the Story:
 - i. **13:5** *"Now the Philistines assembled to fight with Israel, 30,000 chariots and 6,000 horsemen, and people like the sand which is on the seashore in abundance; and they came up and camped in Michmash, east of Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in a strait (for the people were hard-pressed), then the people hid themselves in caves, in thickets, in cliffs, in cellars, and in pits. Also {some of} the Hebrews crossed the Jordan into the land of Gad and Gilead. But as for Saul, he {was} still in Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. Now he waited seven days, according to the appointed time set by Samuel, but Samuel did not come to Gilgal; and the people were scattering from him."*
 1. The Philistines are responding to action by Jonathan who has attacked an outpost at Geba. The fact that the Philistines have an outpost so deep within Israel tells us that Israel is a nation that is occupied by a foreign army that exact tribute and make life difficult for the common man.
 2. Jonathans attack infuriates the Philistines (whose main cities are on the Mediterranean coast) and they muster an army to put down this "rebellion."
 3. We are told that Israel had only 3,000 soldiers in the field at this place and were facing an army of probably 10 times their number. Saul is leading his army out here and realizes he is outnumbered.
 4. He becomes worried. He has reason for concern.

- a. He sees his troops deserting! They are scattering, hiding, even crossing over the Jordan river to escape. It even says that the people who followed him TREMBLED.
 - b. They all can see the army on the other side of the mountain range, below in the valley at Michmash. The enemy is deep within the Israelite territory, just 30 or so miles from the Jordan River.
 - c. Saul is fortunate that the chariots don't climb craggy hills very well, or the Philistines would defeat him at will.
 - d. So as he and his army watches the Philistine army gathering in the distance, he hatches a plan.
- ii. *13:9 So Saul said, "Bring to me the burnt offering and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering*
1. He stayed till the seventh day like Samuel had instructed him to, yet Samuel had not shown up as he had promised. So he takes action.
 - a. He determines the time to be decisive is now.
 - b. Isn't decisiveness a leadership trait?
 - c. Yet there is a fatal flaw in his decisiveness that leads to tragedy.
 - d. You see, he has put aside righteousness for the sake of expediency.
 - e. *Expediency, according to the dictionary, is to take action where the end justifies the means, choosing the shortest path and disregarding all other considerations.*
 - f. According to the law given to Moses, only a priest was permitted to offer sacrifices.
 - g. Saul chooses not to wait for Samuel as instructed, and takes upon himself the role that the priest alone was permitted to fill and offers the sacrifice himself.
 2. There is another place in the bible where expediency is mentioned as well.
 - a. When the religious rulers are discussing what to do with Jesus who is performing miracles and causing people to speculate that he is the Christ.
 - i. John 11: **48-50** *"If we let Him {go on} like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish."*
 - b. The Greek word used for expedient is *Sumphero* – to do what is “profitable” or in your own best interests.

- c. When I think of profits and expedience I think of Enron, WorldCom, and a host of other corporate giants did what was profitable...or at least what made them look good in profits.
 - i. They ignored the accounting rules.
 - ii. They ignored the morality of cheating investors.
 - iii. They simply did what was expedient.
 - iv. The end justified the means to them, and hundreds of billions of dollars in people's life savings and retirement plans evaporated.
- 3. And for Saul, if it was profitable...that is, to prevent people from deserting the army, then it was excusable in his eyes.
- 4. But, in order for a thing to be expedient and appropriate in spiritual matters, it must be in harmony with God's Word and it must accomplish what God deems that it accomplish.
- 5. What about you?
 - a. Where are you cutting corners with your relationship with God?
 - b. Where are you doing what is in your own best interest and ignoring what God wants?
 - c. Do you know that there are consequences to expediency?

c. Samuel's Response: -

- i. **1 Samuel 13:10-14** *As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came; and Saul went out to meet him {and} to greet him. But Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "Because I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the appointed days, and that the Philistines were assembling at Michmash, therefore I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not asked the favor of the LORD.' So I forced myself and offered the burnt offering."*
- ii. *Samuel said to Saul, "You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, for now the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. "But now your kingdom shall not endure. The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you."*
- iii. Saul's crime? Choosing what was good for himself rather than considering what God would want, what was right and good.
 - 1. He wanted to stop people from deserting.
 - 2. He wanted to do the "religious act" before going into battle.
 - a. He wanted to ask for the "favor of the Lord."
 - b. He wanted God to bless his plans.

3. To Saul, it may have been a rationale that said...this is like blessing the food before you eat. Since the prophet wasn't there, he simply did it himself.
 - a. After all, you don't need a preacher to offer the blessing on the pot luck do you?
 - b. But this is different than a mere blessing.
 - c. It was a holy act of sacrifice, an solemn offering before God to seek His face.
 - d. It was an act of Holy Worship.
 - e. Saul treated it as commonplace, as if anyone could do it, as if God was just another household idol that he had to appease.
4. **Application:** Think about our act of worship here each Sunday morning. Do you treat it as common or special?
 - a. I'm not talking about getting dressed up real fancy for God, but I am talking about preparing your heart, mind and spirit for an encounter with our Holy God who sent His Son to die for us.
 - b. Are you preparing yourself for something special to happen each and every Sunday?
 - c. I know that many of our praise team members are very aware of the special nature of our worship and sincerely ask God to prepare them for this holy honor of leading you to God's throne and presence.
- d. Back to our text...
 - i. Did you notice also how he transfers blame to Samuel? "and *that you did not come within the appointed days...and I forced myself...*"
 1. **Godly leaders won't excuse their actions but recognize & repent when they recognize that they have violated God's ways.**
 2. If we were comparing David and Saul's leadership here, you would notice that when David was confronted with his sins (he was several times, for conducting a census and for taking someone else's wife and killing her husband) he showed a heart that was tender toward God, one that CARED whether or not he had offended God.
 3. **How about you? Do you make up excuses when you are confronted with your sin? Do you pass blame on others? Or do you own your sin?**
- e. Saul's expediency continues in Chapter 14, starting in v. 15. Here we join Saul after his son, Jonathan conducted a successful raid on Philistine outpost where he and his armor bearer kills 20 Philistine soldiers and causes a general panic in the Philistine camp.
 - i. *The panic struck the whole army – those in the camp and field, and those in the outposts and raiding parties and the ground shook. It was a panic sent by God. Saul's lookouts at Gibeah in Benjamin saw the army melting away in all directions. Then Saul said to the men who were with him, 'Muster the forces and see who has left us (or who has*

caused this)” When they did, it was Jonathan and his armor bearer who were not there. Saul said to Ahijah (the priest) “Bring the ark of God” (At that time it was with the Israelites) While Saul was talking the priest, the tumult in the Philistine camp increased more and more. So Saul said to the priest, “Withdraw your hand.” Then Saul and all his men assembled and went into battle. They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords.”

- ii. I’m not sure if you saw it here, but Saul thinks he doesn’t need to consult God. He sees panic on the part of the Philistine army and decides the time for action is NOW! So he doesn’t wait, in fact, he tells the priest to put the Ummim and Thummim away (“withdraw your hand”) because he thinks it is obvious as what to do.
 1. **Godly Leaders discipline themselves to Listen to God even when the path appears obvious.**
- iii. Now on the surface, it would appear that Saul made the right decision. He crushes the Philistine army as it is scattered and unorganized.
- iv. But there is a subtlety that is missed by those who view expedience as the answer to their life’s challenges.
 1. Just because something “works” doesn’t mean it is God’s will or it is right.
 2. **Success is not necessarily a measure of God’s blessing!**
 - a. In fact, in the New Testament, the disciples often asked Jesus questions pertaining to people who had been born blind or who suffered greatly and asked what kind of sin they had committed to deserve this suffering.
 - b. On the other hand, it was common for the Pharisees and rulers of Israel to believe that if you were prosperous that meant that God had blessed you.
 - i. They based this view on a long standing biblical tradition that looked at the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) and saw that their blessings were directly proportionate to their obedience to God.
 - ii. What isn’t understood is that blessings are blessings. They are gifts. A blessing cannot be earned! It is grace! God blesses who He chooses to bless.
 - iii. The reason why many godly people live prosperously is not because they have somehow unlocked a secret bible verse about how to manipulate God into giving them everything their heart desires.
 - iv. Much more commonly, the reason is that they have ordered their lives according to biblical principles which have allowed them to be used by God in such a way that they have proven faithful in small things and God places them in charge of bigger things.

- c. I don't know about you, but I have owned a small business before that was prosperous. And I can tell you first hand, prosperity is not always a blessing. It can be a curse as well!
 - i. You have to work longer hours, spend less time with your family.
 - ii. You pay for more employees, carry more headaches, make more decisions. Your stress grows as your business grows.
 - iii. Contrary to the teachers of the Prosperity Doctrine....Prosperity may be a sign of worldly success but it has very little to do with spiritual success or God's blessings.
- v. Now there is another unplanned consequence behind Saul's choice not to consult God before engaging the enemy...it is a consequence of expediency.

vi. **1 Samuel 14:24-35**

1. *24 Now the men of Israel were hard-pressed on that day, for Saul had put the people under oath, saying, "Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies." So none of the people tasted food. 25 All {the people of} the land entered the forest, and there was honey on the ground. 26 When the people entered the forest, behold, {there was} a flow of honey; but no man put his hand to his mouth, for the people feared the oath.*
2. *27 But Jonathan had not heard when his father put the people under oath; therefore, he put out the end of the staff that {was} in his hand and dipped it in the honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened.*
3. *28 Then one of the people said, "Your father strictly put the people under oath, saying, 'Cursed be the man who eats food today.' " And the people were weary. 29 Then Jonathan said, "My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. 30 "How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great."*
4. *31 They struck among the Philistines that day from Michmash to Aijalon. And the people were very weary. 32 The people rushed greedily upon the spoil, and took sheep and oxen and calves, and slew {them} on the ground; and the people ate {them} with the blood. 33 Then they told Saul, saying, "Behold, the people are sinning against the LORD by eating with the blood." And he said, "You have acted treacherously; roll a great stone to me today." 34 Saul said, "Disperse yourselves among the people and say to them, 'Each one of you bring me his ox or his sheep, and slaughter {it} here and eat; and do not sin against the LORD by eating with the blood.' " So all the people that night brought each one his ox with him and slaughtered {it} there. 35 And Saul built an altar to the LORD; it was the first altar that he built to the LORD."*
5. Saul's expediency in decision making results in the making of a rash vow.

- a. Saul for some reason speaks a vow over his army, prohibiting them from eating anything until they have vanquished their enemies.
 - b. We cannot be sure of why he did this, but it is likely an attempt to persuade God to give him a greater victory.
 - i. .
- vii. All of this said, Jonathan is not aware of his father's vow, and has a taste of honey. He is told about it by his soldiers and basically says what is on his mind.
 1. Jonathan knows an army fights on its stomach. A weakened army is no army at all.
 2. His father has acted rashly. The consequence is lengthy...Jonathan stands trial for his breaking of his father's vow and is sentenced to death but the people of the army intervene.
 3. The consequence is much deeper however, as the army is famished from not eating, and when the time of the vow is past, they dive into their food, failing to cook it properly.
 4. Their sin is the direct result of their leader's failure to consult God and to act prudently.
 - a. Saul would not have made the rash vow had he consulted God and heard God's plan.
 - b. But expediency was his method and it nearly cost him his son's life and led to his army sinning by eating blood.
 - c. The additional consequence is that they were so exhausted that they did not completely annihilate their enemy who would fight another day. In other words, a failure to consult God, being expedient would cost more Israel's soldier's lives later.
 - d. In other words, **Leaders who take shortcuts will find those short cuts only lead to failure.**
- viii. There are two key issues we should examine as well:
 1. The nature of a vow.
 - a. **Vows cannot be "broken" – they are your word before God.**
 - b. Vows do not have to be solemn oaths to bind us to our word.
 - c. Vows should not be made hastily.
 - d. Vows are binding upon those who make them but not upon others who unknowingly break them. (this passage).
 - e. Vows should not be made as a sort of bargaining with God..."if you only get me out of this, I will go to church forever."
 2. The nature of a fast
 - a. A fast is not a tool to manipulate God.
 - i. It is not magic.

- ii. Like holding your breath won't get mom and dad to give you what you want, neither will refusing to eat force God to give you what you want.
 - b. **The primary purpose of a fast is a humbling of the human body and flesh before the Spirit of God**
 - c. A fast brings our flesh under the control of the Spirit of God and allows us to better HEAR God.
 - d. A fast ought to be a regular part of the Christian life
3. We will look more carefully at these two highly misunderstood issues tonight (if we meet tonight because of the holiday weekend).

How about you? Have you chosen the shortcuts in life instead of taking the harder road of listening for God?

Bob Jones is noted for saying, "it is a sin to do less than your best." Have you been spiritually lazy? Have you been taking the easy way and reaping the fruits of your shortcuts? Aren't you tired of that?

The old preacher, J. Wallace Hamilton, once told a story. It was at a time where there was a lot of loyalty between people who worked together, and a very wealthy man had a foreman who had been with him for years. The rich man went on a long trip, and left a large sum of money with his foreman with which he was to build a beautiful, quality home. It was to have the best of everything. After his boss left, the foreman started thinking about things, and decided to cut some corners and save some money, which he planned to keep for himself. He used cheap lumber, inferior products, and poor workmanship in order to make more money for himself. When the house was completed, the owner returned and turned to the foreman and said, "You have always been so faithful and loyal, and I want to reward you before I die. Here are the keys to the house. It is yours." The foreman's shortcuts ultimately were costly to him. He's the one who paid the price.

Our attempts to avoid pain and struggle and heartache and work are not only futile, they will forever stunt our growth into mature, healthy and happy adulthood. Whenever we try to skimp on the effort needed for growth, there will be no growth. It doesn't come magically or without effort. It takes fully investing in every aspect of life—the good, the bad, the trials and tribulations, as well as the joys and triumphs. When we try to take shortcuts and don't walk through the full process, we are less than we might otherwise be. We don't learn the lessons that life is providing us, and we don't develop into the person we were created to be. Someone has said, "There is no part of life that does not contain lessons. If you are alive, there are lessons to be learned." But we don't learn those lessons if we try to take shortcuts through life.

In the same way, there are no Microwave disciples. You cannot get what you need from 5 minutes in the bible. You must invest your life in hearing God.

I heard of a marathon runner who before his first marathon got tired of running the 3 to 5 miles a day that he was told he should. He scaled back to a mile or two. On the day of the marathon, he didn't have the stamina to run more than 15 miles. But the next marathon, he practiced and prepared properly, refusing to take the shortcuts.

Hearing God and becoming an influencer for Him requires that we say no to shortcuts. That we learn to be disciplined so as to listen to God on a daily basis, journaling, praying and reading our bibles. If you expect to hear God on Sunday without listening to Him during the week, you have taken a shortcut and will be seriously disappointed!

Salvation:

Jesus said in Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. "For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Maybe you believe that there is a short-cut to heaven...that is you "do the right things" that you can get there? Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the father but through me." There is no other way other than Jesus, and He is the one who said it. There is no way around Jesus. No shortcut. You cannot get to Jesus if you want to hold onto your past. You must let it go to have Him. Choosing life in Jesus Christ means death to your old way of life. Won't you choose Him today?